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News Release

UDOH a Leader in Employee Wellness Efforts

Department offers wellness resources for businesses, too

(Salt Lake City) - Prizes, wellness walks, and free access to an on-site fitness center are just some of the activities the Utah Department of Health Cannon Wellness Council has planned to celebrate 2010 National Employee Health and Fitness (NEHF) Day. The annual observance was created by the National Association for Health & Fitness to promote the benefits of physical activity for individuals through worksite health promotion.

In conjunction with the observance, Governor Gary Herbert has proclaimed today, May 19, "Utah Employee Health and Fitness Day". Since an estimated 70% of the nation's medical costs are lifestyle related, and employees spend 50% of their waking hours at work, research shows the worksite is a logical and effective location to target health related behaviors. The declaration also supports the Governor's Work Well Recommendations, which focus on health and fitness at the worksite.

A growing number of employers are concerned about keeping their employees healthy while containing healthcare costs. Worksite health promotion programs enhance the overall health and productivity of an organization. Benefits for employers include decreased rates of illness and injuries and reduced employee absenteeism, and employees benefit from the programs with lower stress levels, improved physical fitness and increased well-being.

"We see those benefits every day among employees who participate in our wellness activities," says Joni Alonso, Co-chair of the UDOH Cannon Wellness Council. "We get very positive feedback from participants who say that their overall health has improved."

Utah companies interested in improving the health of their employees can get the free UDOH workplace toolkit ‘Building a Healthy Worksite: A Guide to Lower Healthcare Costs and More Productive Employees’. The kit offers a step-by-step guide to starting a worksite wellness program, company and employee surveys, and resources on health conditions like diabetes, asthma and arthritis.

“Well-designed worksite wellness programs provide a long-term approach to a healthy workforce,” says Alonso. “And special events like NEHF Day allow us to spotlight our commitment to providing education and support for employees to make healthy lifestyle choices.”

For more information on worksite wellness or to download a free copy of the toolkit, visit <http://www.health.utah.gov/worksitewellness>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.